THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. III. June 25, 1937 Tammuz 16, 5697 No. 10.

EDITORIALS

DR. KAPLAN SAILS FOR PALESTINE
THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE JEWISH SCHOOL SCHEDULE
"BETTER IS A LITTLE WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS"

KABBALA AT THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY

By Gerhard Scholem

JACOB EMDEN

By Theodore Friedman

"THE OLD BUNCH"

By Charles Frankel

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200

Dr. Kaplan Sails For Palestine

OF THE great Nahman Krohmal it was once said that a whole generation of Jewish students lived upon the crumbs of his learned table. We, the editors of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, have had a similar privilege in our association with Mordecai M. Kaplan. He has been to us, as it were, spiritual bread and wine, both sustenance and stimulation in our Jewish thought life. In this, the last issue of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST to be published before Dr. Kaplan goes to Palestine for a sojourn of two years, we break our precedent of editorial anonymity and impersonality with an expression of the love and gratitude we bear him.

We are not unaware of the singular honor which has been paid to Dr. Kaplan in his appointment as Professor of the Philosophy of Education at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. We know that he has been called to that post from among all the Jewish educators of the world because of his creative scholarship, his clarity of thought and his integrity. We rejoice with all his friends in the tribute paid to him and in the recognition implied by his election. Knowing him as we do, we are confident that he will be stimulated by his stay in Palestine into further contributions to Jewish thought. And yet as we contemplate the future, the resumption of our work next season without his leadership and his guidance, we cannot help feeling a deep sense of regret at his absence, a regret not altogether untinged by dismay. THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST will continue, of course, but to us who are responsible for its future the two year period of Dr. Kaplan's absence will be at once a period of trial and one of personal impoverishment.

The readers of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST cannot begin to comprehend what the guidance of Dr. Kaplan has meant to us. Week by week we have sat at the feet of a man possessed of a most unusually varied and thorough scholarship. We have had the privilege of contact with a mind brilliantly clear in its

thought processes, impatient of superficialities, plunging instinctively to the deep core of any problem with which it grappled. We have worked in the presence of an incarnation of moral and intellectual courage. We have touched day by day one who served the truth unhesitatingly and unswervingly. We have sat face to face with one motivated by a deep, compassionate and understanding love of mankind, with one completely devoted to everything good, true and beautiful in man's spiritual aspiration. It has been given to us, as to few others, to observe a man possessed of deep faith in mankind, in the future of Judaism and in the meaning and significance of religion—a faith all the more impressive because it was clear-eyed in its understanding of the obstacles that make faith difficult. If then the readers of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST have found in our columns anything of learning, of clarity of thought, of the will to deal with problems in their essence rather than their surface manifestations, of courage in the face of evil, of devotion to truth, of confidence in the transcendence and ultimate vindication of the right, and of hopefulness for Judaism, that has been so because the leadership of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST has been centered in one who possessed to the full the ideal characteristics associated by Jewish tradition with the *zadik* and the *talmid hoham*. Let no one minimize the importance of personal leadership in life. We know from our experience that the character of the mentor penetrated into the remotest recesses and reaches to the most distant peripheries of the organism over which he presides.

Our regrets over Dr. Kaplan's absence spring not alone from our anxiety over the future of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, important as that is to us. There is also something personal, something, if you will, selfish in our concern. It is an old truism that he who touches pitch shall be defiled therewith. But it is equally and also true that he who touches something brilliant and clear and luminant shall, when he withdraws his hand, find something of that luminosity upon his fingertips. In him we have touched light and been illumined. Each of us has been instructed and stimulated intellectually. We have been made to see clearly in many areas where once we saw uncertainly. We have carried away with ourselves from him something of his spirit. As human beings, concerned with our own spiritual salvation, we cannot help regretting the withdrawal for a time of his immediate influence from our lives.

And yet, paradox though it may seem, we know for all our regrets and hesitations over Dr. Kaplan's absence that his personal presence with us is not indispensable for the continuance of our work. For leaderships are of two types. There is that leadership which is primarily a matter of personality, of those personal equipments and traits, such as social magnetism or oratorical ability, which impel men to follow without regard to objectives or methods. But there is another leadership, that of one who has perceived a problem where others have failed to perceive it, who has resolved that problem into its component elements, and who has evolved a program by which the problem can be transcended. Such leadership can best be characterized as prophetic. In it the personality and physical presence of the leader play relatively a secondary role. It is the leadership of the idea—unfettered by time, space, or the accidents of human destiny. Throughout and most distinctively, such has been the character of Dr.

Kaplan's guidance. His thought has come to transcend him in importance. His presence is precious to us, but in his absence his philosophy of Jewish life and the program which flows from it, his resolution of religious and moral impasses remain undisturbed in their clarity, cogency and relevance.

As his personal friends we wish him and those dear to him God-speed. We shall attempt to be faithful to the stewardship which he has assigned to us. Beyond all else, we shall have present with us what is most essentially Mordecai M. Kaplan, present in the system of thinking which he first charted, in the ideals, Jewish and human, which he has set before us, and in the cause of Jewish Reconstruction to which he has dedicated his life.

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The Reconstruction of the Jewish School Schedule

WE have previously called attention to an erroneous impression current in some circles that only twenty-five percent of our children receive a Jewish education. As a matter of fact Jewish educators have pointed out that about seventy-five percent of Jewish children attend a Jewish school some time during their elementary school years, but that they do not stay long enough to benefit from such schooling. In the weekday school (Talmud Torah) eighty percent of the pupils remain less than two years, while those who attend the Sunday schools for a longer period of time receive a very inadequate Jewish education. It would seem, therefore, that Jewish parents send their children to a Jewish school perfunctorily, out of a vague sense of Jewish duty, but show little concern for the amount of Jewish knowledge, or the quality of Jewish education attained by them. Without minimizing the parent's responsibility for this poor quality and low standard in the Jewish training of the child, there are other contributing factors, which should not be ignored. Among them is the very burdensome schedule which attendance at both the public school and Jewish school imposes upon the Jewish child.

While during the last two decades there has been some improvement in the physical equipment of school buildings, the type of teachers, the curriculum, and the financing of the schools, there has been comparatively little progress in the adjustment of the Jewish school schedule in conformity with what is feasible in this country.

From the point of view of schedule, there exist in America three types of Jewish schools—the Sunday school, the supplementary weekday school (Talmud Torah) and the all day school (parochial or Yeshibah school). The last named has tried to solve the school schedule problem of the Jewish child by combining public school and Hebrew school schedules into one. The older Yeshibah schools give Hebrew instruction from nine in the morning to three in the afternoon and English instruction from four to seven in the afternoon. The newer Yeshibah schools meet from about nine in the morning to four in the afternoon, devoting the morning to Hebrew subjects and the afternoon to Engish subjects. There is still a third type of all day school, namely, the private progressive school, which meets from about nine in the morning until about three in the afternoon, and which weaves Hebrew and other Jewish subject matter into the regular secular school program.

The Sunday school has been unable to add more hours on Sundays, and has, therefore, attempted to add one or more weekday afternoon hours for a selected number of its pupils.

It is the supplementary weekday school (Talmud Torah) which has felt the pressure of the schedule problem most keenly. Its schedule called for daily attendance on regular weekdays from four to six in the afternoon or from six to eight in the evening, in addition to Sunday morning. But this type of school finds it increasingly less possible to hold sessions during the hours of six to eight or to insist on daily attendance, because of changing economic and social conditions of the Jewish population in America.

New schedule adjustments, therefore, become necessary. The concentrated Jewish educational program in the summer camp is one such attempt at schedule adjustment. Another attempt of a different character has just been announced by Ivriah, the Women's Division of the Jewish Education Association in New York City. It is an attempt to reach the Jewish child during his early years before the public school claims all or most of his time and attention. The project calls for experimentation with children between the ages of four to eight, and for attendance at a kindergarten school to be called *Bet Hayeled,* the "Child's House." The proposed course of study will prepare the child to enter the second or the third grade of the public school, as well as an advanced class in the supplementary Hebrew weekday school. It is expected that the child's early mastery of the elements of Hebrew may ease his required schedule of attendance at the Talmud Torah, and that he will find his studies there more interesting. This project is not conceived as another parochial school. On the contrary, it accepts the public school as basic, and then attempts to articulate Jewish schooling more normally with public schooling. It calls for a teacher who is qualified to teach both Hebrew and English subject matter and is familiar with the atmosphere and requirements of both types of school. It is to be directed and taught by Jewish teachers, and will be guided by an advisory board of outstanding Jewish and non-Jewish educators.

This experiment has in addition two aspects of special interest to the Jewish community. It is to be endowed, and it is to be sponsored by Jewish mothers interested in the Jewish education of their own children, thus assuring it material and moral support. It is a welcome expression of the Jewish mother's search for a normal integrated school program for her child, which may offer him the benefits of a good secular education and of an adequate Jewish education. This experiment will be watched by many who wish it success, and who hope that it may contribute towards the reconstruction of the Jewish school program.

"Better Is a Little With Righteousness"

HOW shall business men react to the current widespread unrest of American labor? We had been assured that the Wagner Labor Act would bring us industrial peace. The Wagner Act has become the law of the land. Nevertheless, a wave of strikes of unprecedented proportion is harassing the industrial centers of our country. At least 100,000 men are estimated as being idle in the steel communities alone, with large-scale losses of production, profits, wages and general business turnover.

Many employers have become frankly hysterical. As they see it, labor is out to ruin the country. Mr. Henry W. Allen of Wichita, Kansas, speaks for many a businessman when, in a letter to the New York *Times,* he complains: "Labor strikes such as have been so numerous in Michigan are essentially anarchistic in their nature, and from violation of property rights they lead directly to lawlessness, disorder and

revolution." A good deal of the blame for this unfortunate state of affairs is, of course, heaped upon the New Deal administration in Washington which has given labor agitators the freedom, if not the outright encouragement, to carry on their pernicious activities.

Business leaders have advocated different plans as to how this menace of labor ought to be met. Envious of the ease with which labor is controlled in fascist countries, some have been dreaming — and working — for a fascist America. Ambassador Dodd's recent warning that an American billionaire, by whom he obviously meant Mr. Henry Ford, was ready to sponsor a large-scale fascist movement in this country, is only one of the many recent indications that leaders of American industry have begun to think very seriously in fascist terms. Others have demanded a curb of labor within the framework of our existing democratic institutions. They have supported such legislative reforms as compulsory arbitration in industrial disputes, the incorporation of trade unions, and the outlawing of sit-down strikes.

For the time being, industry has, however, had to rely on its own resources for the protection of its rights. Industrialists have met the challenge of labor by fighting back. The lengths to which some of them are prepared to go in fighting back is clearly attested to by the recent events in South Chicago when the guardians of a steel company's property, a detachment of obliging policemen, fired into an unarmed mass of pickets killing seven men and wounding scores of others.

We believe that these are very poor methods of meeting the challenge of labor unrest. They are all based upon the assumption that the company's property is more precious than the lives of its workers. Intimidating or suppressing labor does not remove the grievances against which labor is rebelling. It only removes the means by which these grievances may be articulated. Industry may thereby achieve a momentary triumph and even enjoy a period of uninterrupted peace. But the day of reckoning will come later on. The class cleavage will grow sharper. The hatred of employe toward employer will grow more bitter. In the end, it will explode in even more devastating forms. What this country needs is not a formula whereby labor may be vanquished, but a formula whereby labor and capital may achieve good-will.

We urge this understanding particularly upon the Jewish employer. A society that is seething with mass unrest is fertile soil for anti-Semitism, as history has so tragically proven. A determined attack of capital against the democratic rights of labor will require a scapegoat, and there is no doubt that the Jew will be made to play that role. The Jew will be blamed for the abuses which industry is unwilling to rectify. At the same time, he will also be blamed for the movements of reform, in order to discredit them. Jew hatred will be used to divide and to confuse the ranks of labor.

Indeed, did not Mr. Arthur O. Wharton of the A. F. of L. recently declare that employers prefer to deal with his organization because the C.I.O. consisted of "radicals and soap-box artists, professional bums, expelled members of labor unions, outright scabs and the Jewish organizations with all their Red affiliates!?"

Some Jews will of course place their class interests before their duties to the Jewish people. Thus we understand that some runaway American Jewish dress manufacturers now operating in Quebec, Canada, have, in a recent strike, urged their Catholic workers to have nothing to do with the "Jewish" and "foreign" agitators of the I.L.G.W.U., but to stick to the Catholic union. These gentlemen, undoubtedly, justified the treason to their people by the consideration that the I.L.G.W.U. demanded a wage scale ranging from $12.50 to $30 per week, whereas the Catholic union was satisfied with a scale of $8 to $14 per week. We believe,

however, that most Jews would not want to make a few more coppers by stabbing their own people in the back.

We recommend that businessmen meet the present unrest of labor by studying labor's grievances and trying to remove them. The wave of current strikes is practically confined to basic industries like automobiles and steel which have never before been unionized. These are industries that have paid tremendous dividends, but at the same time have kept their workers under miserable conditions of long hours, inadequate pay and a terrific speed-up. Labor is now struggling for elementary rights, the right to belong to a union, and for more decent conditions of work. In industries where labor has won these rights, there has been peace. Let those irreconcilable industrialists follow the example of their more far-sighted leaders like Mr. Taylor of U. S. Steel, and accede to the just demands of their men. The unrest now raging upon the American industrial scene will then be allayed. Far-sighted businessmen should be willing to pay the price in curtailed power and profit. As the Bible puts it, "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice."

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Kabbala At the Hebrew University*

By Gerhard Scholem**

Introduction

ONE of the main functions of the Institute of Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University is the formulation of a new approach to Jewish history, based on an attempt to view that history objectively and as a whole.

To view Jewish history objectively and as a whole means that it must be gauged by its original and innermost nature, by a proper estimate of the inner forces and movements which have brought about its external manifestations. This method of viewing Jewish history is different from that adopted by Jewish *Wissenschaft* almost a century ago. The latter was influenced by the attitude of apologetics, and possibly even more by the factors and political considerations involved in the Jewish struggle for political emancipation. It is very doubtful whether the method of Jewish *Wissenschaft* in those days was calculated to help reveal the depths of our history. Indeed, the desire in those earlier researches to take the then contemporary Jewish affairs for granted was quite obvious.

The new approach to Jewish history affects not only the elucidation of historical facts in the narrower sense of the word; it equally changes the interpretation of the spiritual elements which have directly influenced those facts, namely, the development of Jewish thought and faith, philosophy and religious history.

Here, too, we are still influenced by prejudices and scientific views which became current under conditions that are no longer valid for our own generation. Nowadays we stress the importance of establishing an historic point of view from within, as it were; this stress is entirely different from all that has hitherto been prevalent, and is chosen in the light of our own experience and knowledge. Thus it happened in the past that the study of extensive tracts of our history, our literature, and even our forms of life, was ren-

*This article is to appear in the next number of the Information Bulletin of the Hebrew University, which is now being prepared for publication. The Bulletin contains contributions by members of the Hebrew University staff, as well as an abundance of information material on the development of the Hebrew University.

**Professor of Jewish Mystic Literature, Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

dered marasmic by the "evil eye" of contempt and disapprobation. It was regarded as unfruitful and opposed to, or even interfering with, the established line of defensive apologetics which was once accepted for reasons that no longer hold. Nor is it surprising that, in the new attitude towards our past which is gaining ground, those very tracts are the ones that must call for the greatest share of our attenion.

I.

Among the branches of religious history, one of those most requiring such a fresh approach is Jewish mysticism, or Kabbala; and this fresh approach goes hand in hand with the new attitude towards medieval poetry, folk literature, folklore and customs.

In this particular subject the Hebrew University is faced with entirely new tasks which have never been seriously approached anywhere. It is our task, in a measure, to create something out of nothing, and we can benefit considerably from the advantages of our situation. It is our object to estimate the true value of the religious movement known as Kabbala, and to assess the correct position to be assigned to it in the life and history of our people.

The difficulties of our undertaking are by no means few. Apart from the condition in which the investigator finds his sources and material, he is faced with problems of an unusual nature. Objective research in this extensive and rather nebulous religion is rendered more difficult on account of sentiments and moods which have not yet lost their influence. Opposition and enmity deriving from various sources, on the one hand, and apologetics and an exaggerated esteem on the other (which have become current during the past generation at the hands of certain writers) are the dangers between which the serious student must steer.

Actually only two attitudes have been adopted towards the Kabbala among Jews: that of the Kabbalist, and that of the rationalist critic.

The Kabbalist himself lives entirely in his world of cryptic secret knowledge. He knowingly and joyously identifies himself with the long chain of Kabbalist tradition and views it from within. As a result, he acquires the privilege of participating directly in those spiritual values of the Kabbala which still have relevance to his own generation. Yet, at the same time, he necessarily relinquishes many of the possibilities of dispassionate inquiry which the scholar cannot relinquish without violence to his innermost self. He lives within the Kabbala, but even that only to an extremely limited degree. Jewish mysticism has been attempting for almost two thousand years to express the emotions of its followers by a constant donning and doffing of forms, and by questions and answers which, though they change, are ever renewed. It is by no means uniform in the content of its lore, nor even in the emotions which find expression within it; for the factors which have awakened the religious interests of the mystics and affected their thoughts and imaginative faculties, have been very varied. Nevertheless, the experience of the Kabbalists always led them to interpret their own world, as far as they could ascertain and apprehend its data, as unified and harmonious. Often they saw, or attempted to see, their world in the light of the last stage which the development of the Kabbala had then reached. The questions and answers of the later systems—and there is no shortage of systems and fragments of systems in the Kabbala—were easily introduced into the literature that had preceded them. Thus, in the opinion and belief of the Kabbalists, the Kabbala (which literally means "tradition") is the tradition which was first received in the days of the Creation, concerning matters divine and human, and which was entrusted to Adam, or, according to others, to Moses, the man of God. A sense of history and historical criticism were never among the strong points of the mystic sages.

In Jerusalem there are, to the present

day, certain Yeshibot where groups of Kabbalists can be found who are directly maintaining the chain of Kabbalist tradition and safeguarding its spiritual heritage and treasures. Kabbalists dwelling in the diaspora regard them as those most authorized and best fitted to expound their lore. But the great majority of these latter-day Kabbalists have completely forgotten the historic elements of their movement.

The only Kabbalist system which still maintains a measure of vitality is that of Rabbi Shalom Sharabi of Yemen, who lived in Jerusalem during the eighteenth century. In this tradition, the lore of the Kabbalists is based on the secret forces of prayer, on prayer with "devotion," on absorption in and assimilation of the mysteries of divinity and worship, down to details so minute as to border on excess. There are still, at the present day, followers of this lore of mystical devotion by means of prayer, who live their lives in accordance with it during long years of study and preparation. To them all other branches and sections of Kabbalist lore have become closed and obsolete, except insofar as they serve for the theoretical confirmation of the principles of devotion and meditation. If ever they do trouble to read one of the earlier Kabbalist works, it is only in order to discover therein the secrets of their own system.

II.

The attitude of the rationalist critic towards the history and importance of the development of Jewish mysticism is a vastly different one; and it is his view which has largely colored our current opinion. There is no need for detailed explanations of the factors which brought these scholars to their negative opinions regarding the function of the Kabbala in Jewish history. Yet it is not so much these opinions which astonish us today, when we observe the state of research in this vast field. We are very well aware that their attitude, far from being that of the pure scholar, is rather that of the combatant actively grappling with a dangerous foe which is still full of strength and vitality; the foe in question being the Hasidic movement. Enmity can do a great deal; we should be thankful to those zealous early critics who, though their judgment and sense of values may have been affected and warped by their prejudices, nevertheless had their eyes open to see certain important things with great distinctness. Often enough they were in the right, though not for the reasons they themselves gave. Truth to tell, the most astonishing thing in reading the works of those critics is their lack of any sufficient knowledge of the sources or the matters on which in so many cases they ventured to pass judgment. The reason was that the founders of Jewish *Wissenschaft* devoted themselves almost entirely in their researches to subjects which they considered preferable and in need of such exhaustive investigation as to leave no time for a critical approach to our mystical literature.

It is not to the credit of Jewish scholarship that the works of the few persons who were really informed on this subject were never printed, and in some cases were not even recorded, since there was nobody to take an interest. Nor have we reason to be proud of the fact that the greater part of the ideas and views which show a real insight into the world of Kabbala, closed as it was to the rationalists of the Haskalah (Enlightenment) period, were expressed by Christian scholars of mystical tendencies, such as the Englishman Arthur Edward Waite of our day and the German Franz Josef Molitor a century ago. It is a pity that the fine philosophical intuition and natural grasp of such students lose their edge because these students lack any critical sense regarding historical and philological facts, and therefore fail completely when they have to handle problems bearing on such facts.

We still lack a general survey or penetrating analysis of the main systems of later Kabbala, particularly during its

Golden epoch in the sixteenth century at Safed. All the scholars of the school of Samuel David Luzatto, Geiger, and Graetz were prepared to single out the Lurianic school of Kabbala for attack, and to pillory it; yet the sad truth is that not a single one of these judges was able to tell the reader, in any manner worthy of the subject, the nature of the subject which they condemned—the mystic system, the dramatic influence of which on the history of our people has certainly been no less than that of Maimonides' "Guide to the Perplexed." What is more, none of the savants in question saw any need to give such an account. It follows that anybody can sit down and read in our scientific literature how greatly Isaac Luria injured Judaism, but nobody will be able to discover what Isaac Luria himself actually thought.

The natural and obvious result of this antagonistic attitude on the part of the scholars was that, as the authorized guardians neglected this field, all manner of charlatans and dreamers came and treated it as their own property.

III.

The problems connected with the study of Kabbala, deriving from the view of Jewish studies which has to be achieved at our highest cultural institute, stand in distinct contrast to the above views. Practically all the important problems which the student of the Kabbala is required to answer on behalf of the future writers of Jewish history have reached us unsolved—even when they were recognized as problems. The correct understanding of many of our historical epochs depends on our success in solving such problems which are partly of a philosophical nature.

What was the origin of the first mystical conceptions to be found in the Apocryphal and Apocalyptic literatures, the Talmud and the Midrash? What of the oldest documents which reached us in the form of books and pamphlets dating from the end of the Talmudic epoch and possibly even earlier? What were the links between these early mystical teachings in Israel and those religious and mystical movements which came into being towards the end of the classical period?

What mutations did the religious concepts of the Agada undergo before entering the world of the early Kabbalists, and what is the spiritual background of the most ancient of the Kabbalist documents?

Is it still possible to follow the historical evolution of concepts and movements through the initial period during which the Kabbala grew, after its circuits through East and West and its development in Spain into what may be termed the "Mystical Theology" of Judaism?

What is the object of the Zohar, that outstanding product of the Spanish Kabbala? In what does the secret of the Zohar consist? Final and definitive replies will, if possible, have to be found to the many questions arising out of that work, its character, composition and origin—questions which have been dealt with so often and at such great length, though not always on the basis of sufficient preparation.

What were the points of contact and dispute between the Kabbala and Jewish philosophy during the Middle Ages? What was the actual spiritual platform on which their war was waged, and what were the causes that led to the victory of the Kabbala in the Jewish mind for so many generations? What is the secret of the effect and tremendous influence upon the Jewish masses of a movement which was primarily and mainly of a decidedly aristocratic character?

How was it that in the sixteenth century the Kabbala succeeded in becoming a decisive historical factor which effected a considerable transformation in the forms of Jewish life? What was actually taking place during that period in Safed?

What are the connections between the Kabbala and the Messianic movements?

What were the characteristics of the Kabbala during the three centuries in which it was one of the most potent spirit-

ual forces in Jewish life? And what was the contribution of its chief systems, during the efflorescence of the Kabbala, to the religious thought of Israel? Or is it possible that there was no such contribution?

What is the relation between the Kabbala throughout its various systems and what the historian of religion calls "mysticism"? Is there a structure peculiar to Kabbalist thought in general or at any particular epoch? What truth or otherwise is there in the alleged or actual pantheism attributed to the Kabbala as a whole, or to certain single Kabbalists?

What revolution, following the Sabbatianic movement, converted the heritage of the Kabbala, which had been regarded as a holy and precious possession, into a mystical heresy? What is the true connection between the decline of the Kabbala in the Sabbatianic sects and the dawn of the Haskalah?

And finally, how were the vital elements of Kabbalist lore saved and transformed, through the Hasidic movement, into the heritage of the entire Jewish nation?

These are some of the main problems for the solution of which Kabbalistic research at our University must prepare the ground and train the competent scholars. Investigations into these problems will lead to the construction of the history of the Kabbala, which will have to show the inner unity and connecting links running through all the dramatic complications which marked that development. Work upon the Kabbala will have to be correlated with cognate and associated subjects in Jewish Philosophy and History, and will serve to open new vistas to students of those two disciplines in their comprehension of many of the peculiar problems with which they meet.

In actual fact, such undertakings can at present be carried out only in Jerusalem. Only here can modern research meet with the remnants of the Kabbala which are still in existence. Only here can be found those original sources without which all work in this field would have to remain barren and unyielding. Three or four public and private libraries at Jerusalem contain not only well nigh the entire Kabbalist literature which was printed in the course of generations and scattered far and wide; in addition, a great store of manuscripts and photographs of Kabbalistic manuscripts are to be found. They have been amassed for many years and the collections are still in process of growth from year to year. These unpublished sources are of very great importance for any investigation of the Kabbala. There are very few Kabbalist books dating back prior to the expulsion of the Jews from Spain which have been printed; so any attempt to determine the development of the Kabbala during that early period merely on the basis of the printed material is quite impossible. Though the extensive manuscript literature of the early Kabbalists may not have been preserved in its entirety, far more of it is extant than we at first imagined. No doubt many things in the early history of the Kabbala must remain unsolved until the end of time; yet we have reason to hope that from what has survived of those early beginnings of Kabbala, we shall succeed in reconstructing the origins of Jewish mysticism and in determining its various manifestations and mutations.

Jacob Emden

By Theodore Friedman*

IT is a common plaint that despite more than a century of scientific historical research even the leading *personae dramatis* of Jewish history remain but shadowy, dimly realized figures. Nor is it difficult to understand why. An age that found the detailed content of the bulk of Jewish literature, the Halakah and its vast derivative stream of codes, commentaries and super-commentaries, of supreme importance in the guidance of daily life concerned itself but little with such apparently irrelevant matters as the personality and character of the authors of that literature. The Rambam, for example, meant primarily a code of Jewish law and not Moses ben Maimon, an historical figure of surpassing interest. Today, as time and circumstance render the content of much of that literature remote, our interest shifts to the men behind the books. In increasing measure, one can anticipate Jewish historical research cultivating the long neglected field of biography.

A welcome addition to the growing shelf of biographical studies of Jewish worthies is Dr. Mortimer J. Cohen's "Jacob Emden—A Man of Controversy."† For a parallel to the bitter Emden-Eibeschuetz feud that rocked the Jewish world of the eighteenth century for five years in a storm of bans and counter-bans, one must go back to the anti-Maimonidean controversy some five centuries earlier. Even the latter *cause celebre* can hardly duplicate the vindictive rancor, the vulgar street brawls and the appeals to the secular authorities with which the partisans of Rabbis Emden and Eibeschuetz carried on their unrelenting strife. To the historians of the feud, the controversy hinged on Eibeschuetz's alleged secret sympathies and allegiance to the heresy of Sabbatianism. Graetz, contemptuous of the tenuous mysteries of the Kabbala and hence given to viewing with suspicion the man who cultivated them and underestimating their spiritual calibre, concluded that Emden's charge of heresy against the Chief Rabbi of the Triple Community of Altona, Hamburg and Wandsbeck was well founded. Later historians, however, entered the lists on behalf of the much maligned Eibeschuetz and on the basis of a painstakingly detailed examination of the evidence completely exonerated him of the accusation. The interest and importance of the reconsideration of the oft-discussed controversy offered by Dr. Cohen derive mainly from the fact that it views the whole question of alleged Sabbatianism as a smoke-screen that even at this late date but thinly conceals the real issue at stake.

Essentially, our author's thesis runs, the feud was a manifestation of the struggle for control of the Jewish community, so common in the eighteenth century between the poorer masses and the wealthy few. Eibeschuetz, himself of humble origin and tremendously popular with the masses by reason of his eloquence and skill as a preacher, championed the growing demand of the lower classes for a voice in communal matters, while Emden found his chief adherents among a handful of rich individuals. The assertion that Eibeschuetz wrote amulets based on his belief in the claims of Shabbetai Zevi, dead some fifty years at the time, was merely a handy wedge to dislodge the Chief Rabbi from his position.

In the opinion of the reviewer, the proposed social interpretation is scarcely justified on the basis of the evidence offered. Jewish communal elections in the eighteenth century were far from democratic. High property qualifications limited the franchise in the extreme. Hence,

*Rabbi, Temple Beth El, North Bergen, N. J.

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the lay leadership of a community generally resided in an oligarchy. It was this oligarchy that had called Eibeschuetz to fill the position of Chief Rabbi of the Triple Community and that supported him throughout the various ramifications of the quarrel. Indeed, the author himself quotes Emden as bitterly inveighing against the absolute control of the parnassim over the community at large and even the Rabbi. (p. 112) Emden, rather than seeking to curry favor with the wealthy bankers of the community, was impolitic enough in his famous commentary on the Siddur to single them out as dishonest.

Dr. Cohen is on more convincing ground in his novel analysis of the motives that impelled Emden to launch his attack and to persist in it despite repeated rebuff and defeat. Obviously, Emden, as a son of a former rabbi of the community, was a deeply disappointed man when he was not invited to succeed his father. But beyond that understandable chagrin, Emden's ire was fed by a pathological soul suffering from a sexual neurosis. The nature of his vilification of Eibeschuetz and his apparent prepossession with sexual matters point to a frustrated personality that could not find self-adjustment. In his vile onslaughts against his opponent, replete as they were with personal calumny and alleged sexual crimes, he found the emotional release that was otherwise denied him. Despite the impressive number of facts the author has marshalled as the basis for his Freudian interpretation, one is inclined to view this judgment as conjectural and possible rather than an absolute conclusion demanded by the evidence. To argue, as the author does in part, from Emden's attacks on the Frankist movement, a morbid preoccupation with sex, would lead to the dubious conclusion that not the Frankists were suffering from psychical or sexual traumata but that the host of Polish rabbis who opposed them were inordinately concerned with sex. Emden had not merely inherited his father's unstable physical make-up but also his brilliant, if impetuous, mental outlook. The Haham Zevi's violent attacks on the Sabbatian Nehemiah Hayyum adumbrated in miniature the controversy that was to engage his son. May not the element of family tradition, the view that he was carrying on his father's valiant battle for the Lord, have predisposed Emden to see heresy and heretics where none existed?

Above and beyond any possible interpretation, and the author's is highly ingenious in its approach, the story of the controversy reveals the inner break-up of Jewish life in Western Europe on the eve of the Emancipation. The rabbis had spent their powers and intellectual energies in internecine strife, almost completely deaf to the rumblings of the coming storm. Nowhere was there an attempt to seriously reckon with the widening breaches in the wall of Jewish tradition. Emancipation found Jewish leadership totally unprepared to cope with the problems it presented. Inner discipline and authority had been irrevocably dissipated in futile quarrels. Jewry paid the price of the luxury of internal combat in the work of dissolution so easily effected by the Emancipation. It is a saddening picture in which there were few heroes. The portrait of Jacob Emden that stands revealed may evoke pity, but certainly not admiration. But the fault lies in the subject, not in the author to whom we are indebted for a swiftly paced, thoughtful and illuminating picture of a strange, yet characteristic, landmark in an age of Jewish decline. The story carries a distinct overtone, an implication for those who *mutatis mutandi* are still waging the battles of the Lord, in a day when catacylsmic changes shake the foundations of the old world order.

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"The Old Bunch"

By CHARLES FRANKEL

THE critic's reaction to Meyer Levin's lengthy work* is very likely to prove an index of the extent and intensity of that critic's consciousness of Judaism. There are, of course, many pertinent things that can be said about this novel, and many contexts proper for discussion of it. There is here for one thing a comment, bare and startling, upon all the tortured confusion of modernity. Moreover, there is a frantic religious quest holding the parts of this panoramic work together, which, while induplicably contemporary, is not merely contemporary. Mr. Levin's wholly unique picture of a specific, second-generation American-Jewish scene holds common, communicable and permanent meaning—which is a characteristic of great art; this passionate criticism of the present scene has the quality, so to put it, of permanent contemporaneity, for there are recurrent patterns of experience suggested and permanent human themes symbolized. Finally, *The Old Bunch* stands as a prime evocation of the American-Jewish scene; and it is this aspect of the novel which is our concern.

Works of art stand as the exemplars and the storehouses of the goods generated, and the possibilities manifested by a culture. As such, Levin's novel is a drastic commentary upon the lives we live as Jews and, in truth, as men. The critic cannot know Mr. Levin's intention, but that is not particularly pertinent; whatever his intention he has presented a picture of a Jewish community in a large American city which is, to say the least, a trifle unpleasant. The "bunch" is made up of a group of young Chicago Jews, children of immigrants, whose adolescence and youth largely coincide with the boom era of the twenties. They reach a tentative maturity with the depression, so that their further development is, in all cases, retarded, and, in some, permanently affected. There are all kinds of boys and girls in the bunch, and they achieve all kinds and degrees of fulfillment. The great portion of them go to college, the to-be-expected ninety percent become doctors or lawyers, and a respectable number of them arrive at the questionable distinction of Phi Beta Kappa. But only a few of them achieve adjustments—and these are unenviably insecure and partial. Mitch Wilner becomes a successful doctor and a contented one, but he is not happy in any liberal interpretation of that word, for he is a prig and complacent; Sam Eisen achieves, alone of all the bunch, a direction and goal in life through an overwhelming attachment to radicalism, but this is a fulfillment which is only partial, for it is not adjustment to everything he holds worthwhile. And against these precarious stabilities, there is the experience of the rest of the bunch: Joe Freedman can find centrality of purpose only among the haluzim in Palestine (and, even there, he is troubled by the Arab problem); Alvin Fox, neurotic and ascetic, of hasidic temperament, sets out to be a latest model, book-reviewing rabbi; but he mimics Bohemia, and on a wild night takes unto himself a Gentile wife. He lives the rest of his life freighted with a sense of treachery, and haunted by frustration.

They are all of them haunted in the "bunch." Their joy is apt to be the panic-stricken merriment of despair; and their tears are never tragic, but dumb and uncomprehending instead. For each has a tremendous burden to carry, and—what renders the situation pathetic rather than tragic—none recognizes the nature of that burden or his own status in its bearing.

*"The Old Bunch," by Meyer Levin, The Viking Press, 1937.

Each has the burden of himself and his weakness, the burden of economic privation in a sick society, and the burden of his background and his culture; and it is this last which concerns us at the moment.

Most of these young Jews are intensely worried by their Judaism, rather than being worried about it. The nature of their problem is simple: Judaism stands in the way of the *ens realissimum* of their lives climbing the social ladder. But whether they neglect their problem or not, they do not escape it. They are all of them inescapably Jews. One reason they are Jews is because the Gentile world considers them such and treats them as such; but their Judaism goes deeper than that. And it goes deeper than their idiom, tinged as it is with Yiddishisms. It is of the warp and woof of what they hold most sacred. Many of these young Jews attain fair success at depravity; but whatever they hold sacred and valuable is Jewish in specific application. Their piety is a universal manifestation of all groups, but their unique piety is aroused by the sound of the Shofar at even so hybrid a demonstration as was the gathering of Jews at the Chicago World's Fair. And Mort Abramson laughs at the mummery of a dead institution and goes his middle-class way breaking strikes in his factory and fighting the unionization of his workers: but he must make his peace with his conscience and that conscience is loaded —even in its middle-class way—with a righteous rebuke that is suspiciously reminiscent of Isaiah. The way out for these young Jews who are products of a definite past is to face their problem, to introduce, in a word, new intellectual content into received values, to equate Judaism with the broadened twentieth-century horizons which stretch before them. They do not escape their past any more than they can the present which they welcome but do not understand.

The social context in which this unfortunate blindness is generated is, I believe, clear enough. As these young Jews and, indeed, as their parents, improve their material state they become enslaved by the code and the society which allowed them to attain that improvement and which held out security as the Good-in-itself existence. They become parasites in their business and professional relationships and in necessary conjunction, they attempt to throw off or deny their Judaism. It is, of course, impossible for the young Jews who go to make up Levin's collective here to live the kind of lives led by their parents —and nobody is more acutely conscious of that fact than is Levin. But it is significant, I think, that the parents of "the bunch" are staunchly self-conscious, in no adolescent sense, of their Judaism; they live a Judaism which, although narrowly circumscribed and cut off from the major currents of modern existence, is directly and immediately satisfying and enriching. It is the kind of cultural realization which demands no excuse. It supplies its intrinsic justification. And as long as they remain proletarians (and union-members, properly enough) these old Jews live their lives. This does not imply that poverty is the necessary prerequisite for living a vital Judaism, but it does imply that those who are caught in the social-climbing web of circumstance are anxious to throw off their Judaism as a hindrance. And in so doing they become obsessed and only more brutally enslaved.